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# Rose Valland Institute

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## Rose Valland Institute

### **Abstract**

The Rose Valland Institute is an independent interdisciplinary artistic project. It researches and documents the expropriation of property formerly owned by Europe's Jewish population and the ongoing impact of those confiscations. The Institute is named after art historian Rose Valland, who secretly recorded details of Nazi looting during the German occupation of Paris. After the war, she worked for the Commission de Récupération Artistique (Commission for the Recovery of Works of Art) and played a decisive role in the restitution of Nazi-looted artworks. Building on insights gained from Maria Eichhorn's previous exhibition projects *Restitutionspolitik / Politics of Restitution* (2003) and *In den Zelten ...* (2015), the Rose Valland Institute is devoted to the issue of unresolved property and ownership relationships from 1933 through to the present. The Institute investigates fundamental questions concerning the ownership of artworks, land, real estate, financial assets, businesses, movable objects and artifacts, libraries, academic work and patents that were stolen from Jewish owners in Germany and occupied territories

# Rose Valland Institute

## Maria Eichhorn

The *Rose Valland Institute* is an independent interdisciplinary artistic project. It researches and documents the expropriation of property formerly owned by Europe's Jewish population and the ongoing impact of those confiscations. The Institute is named after art historian Rose Valland, who secretly recorded details of Nazi looting during the German occupation of Paris. After the war, she worked for the Commission de Récupération Artistique (Commission for the Recovery of Works of Art) and played a decisive role in the restitution of Nazi-looted artworks.

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The *Rose Valland Institute* introduced itself publicly in March 2017 with a call for papers focusing on the topic of Orphaned Property in Europe. With the open call on the issue of Unlawful Ownership in Germany, the Institute is continuing its activities. The *Rose Valland*

*Institute* is appealing to the public to research Nazi loot that may exist in inherited property and to submit the findings to the Institute.

Established on occasion of documenta 14, the *Institute* was based at the Neue Galerie, Kassel, from June 10 until September 17, 2017. It has been based at the Käte Hamburger International Centre in the Humanities at the University of Bonn since October 2018.

### **Unlawfully Acquired Books from Jewish Ownership**

Unlawfully acquired books from Jewish ownership by the Berliner Stadtbibliothek in 1943, registered in Zugangsbuch J (accession book J)

Zugangsbuch J (accession book J, 1944–45), Zentral- und Landesbibliothek Berlin

William Wordsworth, *The Poetical Works of Wordsworth* (London: Warne, 1891), Zentral- und Landesbibliothek Berlin

Eugen Fröhner, *Lehrbuch der gerichtlichen Tierheilkunde* (Textbook on Forensic Veterinary Medicine, Berlin: Schoetz, 1915), Zentral- und Landesbibliothek Berlin

*Evacuation of the library of the Rothschild family by the staff of Einsatzstab Reichsleiter Rosenberg, Paris* (1940), Photograph by Heinrich Hoffmann, Bayerische Staatsbibliothek, Munich

Text by Sebastian Finsterwalder, Zentral- und Landesbibliothek Berlin

Translation from German by Alicia Reuter

## Maria Eichhorn







**Maria Eichhorn**



## **Provenance Research at the Berlin Central and City State Library**

### **Sebastian Finsterwalder**

What is today the Zentral- und Landesbibliothek Berlin (ZLB, Berlin Central and City State Library) consists of the Berliner Stadtbibliothek (Berlin City Library), founded in 1901, the Amerika-Gedenkbibliothek (American Memorial Library), built in West Berlin in 1954, and the Senatsbibliothek (Senate Library). Books looted during the Nazi era entered the ZLB's inventory through various and not yet fully established routes. The task of ZLB researchers of Nazi looting is to examine suspected inventory, identify looted books, and investigate their origins—with the aim of returning them to their rightful owners or heirs, or, if this is not possible, find so-called fair and just solutions.

The research, begun in 2010, has thus far concentrated on the inventory of the Berliner Stadtbibliothek. The Bergungsstelle für wissenschaftliche Bibliotheken (Recovery Point for Academic Libraries) documents the 1943 purchase of about 40,000 volumes from the apartments of deported Berlin Jews as well as consignments from the post-war period. These contained over 20,000 “gifts” comprised of Nazi plunder. Sampling has shown that the inventories of all three departmental libraries contain looted books.

The ZLB publishes information and illustrations online on the cooperative database Looted Cultural Assets (LCA) on all books, provenance attributes, people, or institutions examined during provenance research.

### **Accession Book J**

In 1943, the Berliner Stadtbibliothek (Berlin City Library) requested the free transfer of about 40,000 books from the “private libraries of evacuated Jews” from the Berlin Stadtkammer (City Chamber). However, the city did not want to provide the books for “free.” They were, according to the Stadtkammer, the property of “enemies of the state” which had fallen to the Reich and should therefore “serve the



promotion of all purposes connected to the solution of the Jewish question.” The correspondence between the Stadtbibliothek, the mayor of the Reich’s capital Berlin, and the Pfandleihanstalt (Public Pawn Office) shows that the parties involved were aware of the books’ provenance.

The books were finally acquired by the Stadtbibliothek for 45,000 Reichsmark and brought to the library. A total of 1,920 book titles were entered into a separate accession book and given inventory numbers beginning with J. Books with this accession number can be unequivocally identified as Nazi loot, independently of any further distinguishing marks. Only about ten percent of these books contain traces that might lead to the owners of the looted goods.

The allocation of call numbers in accession book J took place after the end of the war. Corresponding provenances substantiate that the books not entered with a J call number were gradually transferred into the inventory as “gifts” in the years that followed.

The books presented on the shelf are all registered in accession book J. The accession number and usually also the call number are indicated on the white and grey inset labels. The orange notes mark those books that have obvious evidence of a personal provenance.

Two case studies—books from the possession of Ludwig Simon and Gertrude Wütow—illustrate the search for heirs undertaken by the Zentral- und Landesbibliothek Berlin.

### **Gertrude Hirschweh, née Wütow**

The book William Wordsworth, *The Poetical Works of Wordsworth* (London [et al.]: Warne, 1891), is registered in accession book J under number 1261. It was incorporated in the inventory of the Berliner Stadtbibliothek under the signature Cq 1555. On the title page, a dedication reads: “Gertrude Wütow from her loving Friends Emily, Edith & [Harry R...] November 1892.”

The book was a part of the acquisition from the Pfandleihanstalt (Public Pawn Office). Other than the dedication, the only attributes that can be found in the book trace it back to the Berliner Stadtbibliothek and the Zentral- und Landesbibliothek Berlin (call number, stamp, inventory number, “not for loan” label, etc.).

In accession book J there is yet another volume with provenance features attributable to Gertrude Wütow. Registered under accession number 1542 with the signature Cq 1593 is the book Robert Burns, *The Poetical Works of Robert Burns* (London [et al.]: Warne, 1888) containing a handwritten note: “Received from my dear grandparents on 26.3.1891. G. Wütow.”

The identity of Gertrude Wütow has not been entirely clarified; possibly it is Gertrude Hirschweh, née Wütow, born on March 26, 1874, in Berlin. In support of this contention is the fact that the book was looted from a Berlin apartment and the name Gertrude Wütow, as well as the name Gertrude Hirschweh, not only appears several times in common sources (address books, in a memorial book, and at the Yad Vashem memorial) but also always refers to the same person.

On September 9, 1895, Gertrude Wütow married the pharmacy owner Hermann Hirschweh (born on June 16, 1865 in Jedwabno, East Prussia). Gertrude and Hermann Hirschweh had a daughter, Hertha Johanna, born on June 11, 1896, and possibly at least one other child, Dorothea Hirschweh Beerman. Gertrude Hirschweh was deported to the Riga Ghetto on January 13, 1942; no further information has yet been found on her fate thereafter. To date, no information has been found regarding potential heirs. [As of June 2017]

Two of Gertrude Hirschweh's books were restituted in December 2017.

### Ludwig Simon

The book Eugene Fröhner, *Lehrbuch der gerichtlichen Tierheilkunde* (Textbook on Forensic Veterinary Medicine, Berlin: Schoetz, 1915), is registered in accession book J under number 939. It was incorporated under the signature Ko 481 d in the inventory of the Berliner Stadtbibliothek. On the title page, there is a faintly legible stamp: “Dr. Ludwig Simon [Tierarzt] [Berlin], 43 Linienstr. 6.”

The book was a part of the acquisition from the Pfandleihanstalt (Public Pawn Office). Other than the dedication, the only attributes that can be found in the book trace it back to the Berliner Stadtbibliothek and the Zentral- und Landesbibliothek Berlin (call number, stamp,

inventory number, “not for loan” label, etc.).

Veterinarian Dr. Liepmann Ludwig Simon was born on December 20, 1877, in Schönfließ, Brandenburg and died in 1956 in New York. Ludwig Simon, his wife Mrs. Irma Simon, and their son, Fritz Simon, survived the Shoah in hiding. Although it has been possible to learn a great deal about Ludwig Simon and his family, thus far it has not been possible to find heirs. Irma Simon died in 1999 in Berlin; research into Fritz Simon, born around 1923, has thus far delivered no findings.

### **Album Bundesarchiv Koblenz, B 323/311**

*Beschlagnahmeaktionen in Paris. Transport- und Lageraufnahmen* (Confiscations in Paris. Photographs of depots and transports, 1940–44), Album of eighty-five black-and-white photographs, Bundesarchiv Koblenz, B 323/311

Sarah Gensburger, *Witnessing the Robbing of the Jews. A Photographic Album, Paris, 1940–1944* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2015)

*Louvre Museum—National Museum of Modern Art (Palais de Tokyo)—Mansion of the Caben d’Anvers family—Lévitane department store* (2007), Color photographs by Olivier Amsellem in cooperation with Sarah Gensburger and Michèle Cohen

The photographs were first displayed in the exhibition *Retour sur les lieux. La Spoliation des Juifs à Paris* in 2007. The exhibition was hosted by BETC whose offices were located in the former Lévitane internment camp, 85–87 rue du Faubourg Saint-Martin in the 10th arrondissement in Paris.

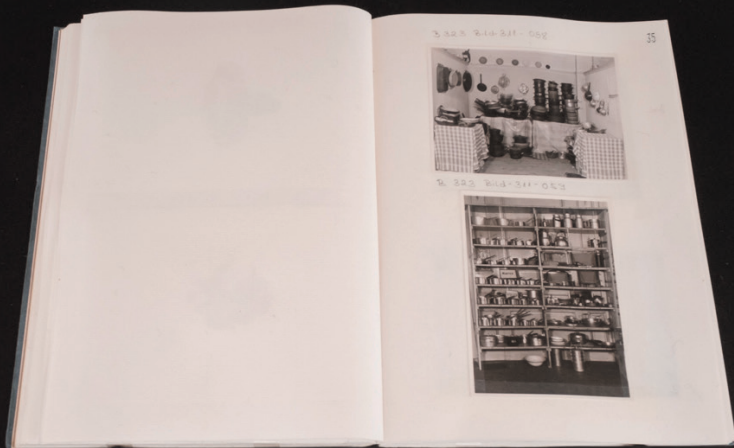
*The Eiffel Tower as seen from Trocadéro* (2017), Color photograph by Kevin Labourdette

Text by Sarah Gensburger, Le Centre national de la recherche scientifique, Paris

Translation from English by Ben Mohai

Copy-editing by Eva Wilson

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## Maria Eichhorn







## **Looking at the Past, Witnessing History: The Koblenz Album**

**Sarah Gensburger**

Having been the global capital of the art world before the war, the city of Paris greatly fueled Nazi greed during the German occupation of France. In Paris, the looting began with the arrival of German troops on June 14, 1940. The first objects to be targeted were artworks owned by Jewish collectors. However, far less known today, from 1942 onwards the looting of Parisian apartments “abandoned” by Jewish tenants was also systematically organized. Following the decision to implement the “Final Solution,” this operation was christened “Möbel-Aktion” (Operation Furniture). On March 25, 1942, a dedicated department was duly established in Paris: the “Dienststelle Westen” (Western Department). The closely entangled nature of the continuous expansion of the looting and the orchestration of genocide is made starkly clear by the fact that, just two days later, the first deportation convoy left France with 1,112 Jews on board. By August 1944, up to 38,000 Parisian homes would be emptied. Before being transported to Germany, everyday items such as furniture, cutlery, or toys were stored in several depots in Paris: the pianos at the Musée National d’Art Moderne (the present-day Palais de Tokyo); books and musical scores at the rue de Richelieu; furniture at 43 quai de la Gare (the Austerlitz warehouse); objects and clothes at 85–97 rue du Faubourg-Saint-Martin (the Lévitán department store); and fine items, such as china or lace, at 2 rue Bassano.

A Jewish workforce was assigned the task of packing these objects into crates, and consequently the Austerlitz warehouse, the Lévitán department store, and the depot at 2 rue Bassano became internment camps in the very center of Paris. At least 795 people were held at these camps between July 1943 and August 1944. Twenty percent of these prisoners were ultimately deported, mainly to Auschwitz. In August 1944, the remaining internees were liberated. Lévitán, Austerlitz, and Bassano are the names most commonly used to refer to these Parisian satellites of the Drancy assembly and detention camp. In 2003, together with the historian Jean-Marc Dreyfus, I wrote their story (*Des camps dans Paris*, Paris: Fayard 2003, English translation: *Nazi labor camps*



*in Paris*, Oxford/New York: Berghahn Books 2011). The archives of the “Dienststelle Westen” had been destroyed at the end of the war, so our research was mainly based on a small number of other official archives, as well as personal letters, diaries, and oral testimonies given by former internees.

Some years later, the existence of a photographic album was brought to my attention.\* This album is preserved in the Bundesarchiv (Federal Archive) in Koblenz under the shelfmark B 323/311.1 It contains eighty-five pictures mainly showing the three camps in Paris, but no captions, except for a note on the first page indicating that the album was created in 1948 by the Munich Central Collecting Point. When I first saw these images, I instinctively began to look at the people in the background, behind the objects themselves, to see if I could recognize any of the detainees whom I had previously either encountered in images in the archives or, in some cases, met personally. I immediately had the powerful impression that many of the pictures had been taken with the express intention of illustrating the accounts given in the former detainees’ interviews or in personal letters from that time, which they had kept and shared with me. The photographs seemed to me to possess a degree of efficiency and clarity that was missing from the textual and oral accounts. I decided to retrace my steps or, rather, to start my journey afresh in the opposite direction until I reached its beginning. Since I had already, so to speak, written this chapter of history before coming across the images that documented it, I found myself in a position to see just what these images were able to tell me that the historical account of the past alone could not. Recognizing this disparity involved taking into account the resonance that photographs necessarily have for the viewer today, as well as the many different gazes which all constitute different routes into the reality presented to our eyes. The inherently contradictory nature of the Holocaust, an experience that is described as impossible to relate, yet is simultaneously made visible in the many surviving photographs of the event, brings into particularly sharp focus the question of the contemporary use of images to create a narrative of the past.

\*Floriane Azoulay and Jean-Marc Dreyfus first made me aware of the existence of this album. I owe them my thanks.

**Maria Eichhorn**

## **Auction records 1935–42, Berlin**

Auction records with lists of the auctioned objects and the names of the buyers, 1935–42, A Rep. 243–04 Nr. 46–63, 66–68, Landesarchiv Berlin

Reproductions of original documents, digital video projection, color, no sound, 720 min.

Digitalization of documents: Mik-Center GmbH, Berlin

Digital image editing: Martin Tony Häußler, Ben Mohai

Video editing and transcoding: Vincent Schwarzinger

Text by Martin Luchterhandt, Landesarchiv Berlin

Translation from German by Alicia Reuter

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Gfd. Nr.	Bezeichnung der Sache bzgl. Nummer des Verzeichnisses		Name und Wohnung des Mieters, dem der Zuschlag erteilt ist oder der bis zum Zuschlag an sein Gebot gebunden bleibt	Dahon während der Versteigerung		Bemerkungen, insbesondere a) Grund der Nichterhebung der Bestenfolge der Biffe b) Bestellung, daß der dem Eigentümer oder Auftrag- geber erteilte Zuschlag als solcher bezeichnet wurde c) zurückgenommene Gebote
				bezahlt RM	zurück- gekauft RM	
1	2	3	4	5	6	
89	7 Rümer	64	Penzel	132,7	—	
90	1 Sone	65	Hub.	6	—	X
1	1 Vase	66	Kallior	4	—	
2	1 Karsglocke	67	Kerner	4	—	
3	Garnitur, Vitruv, Tiff	68	Krupke	275	—	Thornallee 24
4	Fensterlekt.	70	Chiller	27	—	
5	2 Appliquen	71	Hub.	35	—	
6	2 "	72	Penzel	40	—	
7	2 Reliquetten	72	Lehmit	40	—	
8	1 Tiff	73	—	—	—	2. Auftragsgeber zur. 98
9	Papierkorb, Vorlege	74	Vöring	6	—	
100	1 Kissen	75	Thunich	11	—	
1	1 Hocker	76	Guldi	2	—	
2	1 Liskerei	77	Kalitzki	3	—	X
3	1 Bild	78	Kröter	1	—	X
4	4 Rahmen	79	Burmer	3	—	
5	1 Fensterlekt.	78	Knobstein	29	—	
6	1 Krone	79	Hof	32	—	
7	2 Wandarmen	80	Filler	7	—	
8	1 Herrenzimmer	81	Ritter	420	—	Güntzelstr 48
9	1 Tiff	82	Baum	50	—	
110	1 Gramm. Waage	83	Thloos	25	—	
				236,1	—	Kulturgut 10. —

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Nf. Nr.	Bezeichnung der Sache bzw. Nummer des Verzeichnisses		Name und Wohnung des Bieters, dem der Zuschlag erteilt ist oder der bis zum Zuschlag an sein Gebot gebunden bleibt	Davon während der Versteigerung		Bemerkungen, insbesondere a) Grund der Überwindung von der Reihenfolge der Lote b) Feststellung, daß der dem Eigentümer oder Auftrag- geber erteilte Zuschlag als solcher bezeichnet wurde c) zurückgenommene Gebote
				bezahlt RM	zurück- gekauft RM	
1	2	3	4	5	6	
111	1 Speisezimmer	84/85	Ull	236 P.	—	77/98 Rismann
2	2 Fensterdek.	86	Vogt	57	—	
3	1 Kanne	87	Lampe	46	—	
4	2 Applikationen	" a	—	—	—	R. G.
5	1 Kellampe	88	Lehitzki	8	—	
6	1 Randschiff	89	Engelmann	16	—	
7	1 Tischl.	90	Graf	72	—	
8	1 Grammophon	91	Kumpke	2	—	
9	1 " Platten	" a	Lehner	13	—	
120	1 Tisch	92	Kabitzki	6	—	
1	1 Fensterdek.	93	Lehner	38	—	
2	1 Kanne	94	Urmann	53	—	
3	1 "	95	Lorenzmann	45	—	
4	1 Kellampe	96	Purzel	1450	—	Winkler
5	2 Tischl. Lampen	97	Urmann	15	—	
6	1 Teppich	98	Lehner	155	—	Karssen - Ingenieur, Allee 30
7	1 Stühle	99	Werner	53	—	
8	1 "	100	Lehner	21	—	
9	1 Teppich	101	—	—	—	
130	2 Vorleger	102	Bullinger	14	—	
1	2 Stühle	" a	Furmsch	6	—	
132	1 " "	" b	Werner	10	—	
				4733	—	

Nr. 4 25. St. VI. 1924. Versteigerung  
 Carl Hermann Freitag in Berlin 25

Bandend n. Einlage für Versteigerungs-  
 niederstärk - 9 6 Versteigerungsverordnungen

LAB A Rep. 243-84/68/ 8

**Rep. 243-04**  
**Berlin State Archive**

**Martin Luchterhandt**

In 1933, shortly after seizing power, the Nazis established a new governmental agency under the name “Reichskulturkammer” (Reich Chamber of Culture). Only members were permitted to work in the fields of art and culture; exclusion from the chamber meant a ban on employment. Thus, the Reichskulturkammer was the central instrument in the managing of the entire German cultural sector. One of the tasks of the agency was to monitor and control art auctions.

Auction houses were required to register their auctions at the Reichskulturkammer. The applications contained auction orders identified by name and lists of the objects up for auction. In some cases, “non-Aryan property” was marked separately on the lists. If Nazi agencies were interested in certain works or objects, they could intervene in the auction process or prohibit the auction. The auction protocols were obliged to document both the sales prices and buyers’ names.

In Berlin, there were more than twenty auction houses during the Nazi era, whose auction records from 1935 to 1942 have been preserved. As important documents of Jewish expropriation, after the war these made their way into the archives of the Oberfinanzdirektion Berlin (Berlin Regional Finance Office), which was responsible for restitution affairs—its predecessor, the Oberfinanzpräsident (Chief Financial President) Berlin-Brandenburg, was responsible for the expropriation of Jews who had emigrated or been deported. In spring 1989, the Oberfinanzdirektion turned these documents over to the Landesarchiv Berlin (Berlin State Archive), where they are archived and publicly accessible under call number A Rep. 243-04.

There were documents on the auctions of looted Jewish property across the entire territory of the German Reich but, according to current knowledge, they have only been preserved in Berlin. These documents are an important source for provenance research into the identification of works of art and their buyers. They show what items for daily use

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could be found in Jewish households in Berlin, including furniture, decorative art, and works of art, and how widely these possessions were looted, sold, and squandered.

All preceding text comes from [www.rosevallandinstitut.org](http://www.rosevallandinstitut.org)